

The Role of Institutional Social Capital in Participatory Urban Environmental Management

— Case Study of Danang, Central Vietnam —

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1. PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

This study discusses the applicability of methods of social capital to participatory urban environmental management. Inter-relational effects between participatory environmental management and social capital are observed in the case study: the pilot project of environmental learning in Danang, Central Vietnam. As a background of this study, there are much needs of participatory approach in environmental management today, and the concept of social capital has been highlighted as one of the parameters for success.

2. PARTICIPATORY ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL CAPITAL

Participatory approach is mainly implemented in the field of development and environmental management. However, the studies about factors that influence the success of each case, and the strategies and methods for success are not established yet. In recent years, the concept of social capital has got much attention and thought as having influence on civil participation and partnership between residents and government, which is required in participatory environmental management. In this study, the social capital which creates network among stakeholders is defined as institutional social capital. It appears as organizations and institutions in societies. As found in the case of Danang, institutional social capital is comparatively possible to be arranged, and it is highly applicable to participatory environmental management. Proper development of institutional social capital fosters the social capital in locality, and eventually it contributes the success of participatory environmental management.

3. THE ROLE OF CIVIL ORGANIZATION, PROSPECTS FROM CASE STUDY OF DANANG

In Danang, water pollution caused by household waste water has become serious. Responding to pressing environmental problems, Danang city have implemented the participatory environmental learning project, and set the civil organization (EPC) as a implementing agency. EPC is composed of the representatives of residents, local government officers, the primary school teachers and officers of city department which is in charge of environmental issues. They conduct environmental learning activities in the locality. From questionnaire analysis, EPC can be considered as institutional social capital as confirmed as by creation of network among stakeholder and fostering social capital in the locality.

4. CONCLUSION

In participatory environmental management, institutional social capital fosters social capital among stakeholders and promotes civil participation and partnership between residents and government. Through this function, it contributes to success and sustainability of participatory environmental management. This role of institutional social capital is valuable especially in urban area where social structure is complex and is difficult to mobilize overall participation of citizen. However, there is no ideal form of institutional social capital, since situation is different from each case. Careful observation on local condition, stakeholders, social capital and appropriate installation of organizations and institution are strongly required in each case.